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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: RSAF LTG FAISAL COMPLAINS TO AFCENT COMMANDER
ABOUT LACK OF U.S. WEAPONS RELEASABILITY TO SAUDI FORCES

REF: A. 09 RIYADH 1687
[1](#)B. RIYADH 33

Classified By: A/DCM Lisa M. Carle for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY. In a January 6 meeting with U.S. Air Forces Central (AFCENT) Commander Lt Gen Mike Hostage, Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) Commander Prince (Lt Gen) Abd-al-Rahman bin Fahd Al-Faisal Al-Saud laid out an extensive laundry list of releasability problems the RSAF was enduring in trying to obtain U.S. weapons technologies. In both his private meeting with Lt Gen Hostage and a series of briefings, Lt Gen Faisal described in great detail the shortages of urgently needed munitions and other equipment to prosecute the battle against the Houthi rebels. He first likened the situation to one where a neighbor's house is on fire and the closest neighbor refuses to help, citing policy reasons. He later said when the U.S. sold its weaponry, it was like a car dealer selling five cars, but with only eight tires. Lt Gen Faisal also asserted that he had conclusive proof of Iranian involvement in the Houthi insurgency: the RSAF had bombed a mountaintop site, killing some Iranians whose bodies were later shipped to Bandar Abbas. END SUMMARY.

RELEASABILITY PROBLEMS AND THE HOUTHI FIGHT

[1](#)2. (S) Before presenting a series of briefings, RSAF Commander Lt Gen Faisal held a one-on-two meeting with U.S. Air Forces Central (AFCENT) Commander Lt Gen Mike Hostage and U.S. Military Training Mission (USMTM) Chief Maj Gen Paul Van Sickle. Lt Gen Faisal and Lt Gen Hostage both stressed the importance of maintaining a strong, close friendship and an even keel despite whatever political circumstances they might face. (NOTE: At the last minute, both Prince Khalid bin Sultan, the MODA Assistant Minister for Military Affairs, and General Salih bin Ali Al-Muhayya, MODA Chief of the General Staff, refused to see Lt Gen Hostage. It may have been a message of unhappiness about the lack of U.S. technology releases to KSA, and/or unhappiness about proposed new TSA airport screening procedures for Saudi citizens (Refs A and B). Lt Gen Hostage asked Lt Gen Faisal to give both of them his best regards. End Note.)

IRANIAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE HOUTHI REBELLION?

[1](#)3. (S) Lt Gen Faisal made two interesting comments about the Houthi effort: he indicated the Saudi military had moved many villagers from their villages and had sterilized a 5 km swath along the border, turning it into a free-fire zone. Clearly, they are using this crisis to strengthen border security.

Additionally, he said they had proof that Iran was involved. They had attacked a mountain-top site, reputed to be a transmitter site and Kaytusha rocket assembly site. He said the Saudi Air Force bombed it and killed many. He said his intelligence reported that 30 bodies were removed and sent to Eritrea, where Jordanian bodies were then shipped to Jordan and Iranian bodies were shipped to Bandar Abbas. He assured Lt Gen Hostage his intelligence information was definitive.

OUR HOUSE IS ON FIRE AND THE U.S. WON'T HELP

14. (S) Lt Gen Faisal spent the rest of the private office call laying out a series of technology releasability problems facing the RSAF that were preventing it from prosecuting the battle against the Houthi border infiltrators effectively, focusing in particular on slow munitions releases. Lt Gen Faisal likened the situation to one where a neighbor's house bursts into flame, and the closest neighbor says he will cross the fence soon to help, but then doesn't, citing policy as preventing him, but hoping he will still be considered a very good friend. Meanwhile, others who are not close friends are helping. Lt Gen Hostage said he was not directly involved in weapons export control policy, but he would send a message back to his leadership. It was apparent that Lt Gen Faisal was told by his own leadership to convey this releasability message.

RELEASABILITY: IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF BOTH NATIONS

15. (C) Lt Gen Faisal opened the briefings by inviting Lt Gen Hostage on his next visit to travel to RSAF bases across Saudi Arabia. He highlighted the RSAF's long and positive relationship with AFCENT. Jumping quickly to the main issue, Lt Gen Faisal said "compatibility and interoperability come through releasability." He appealed to Lt Gen Hostage to "fight together" to get the necessary weapons systems released to Saudi Arabia because it was in the best interests of both nations. He expressed appreciation for joint exercises with AFCENT, and for major exercises such as Red Flag, adding that the RSAF also participated yearly at the Air Warfare Center exercises in UAE because it wanted to gain from U.S. experience. Lt Gen Hostage echoed Lt Gen Faisal's comments about the long, steady friendship between RSAF and AFCENT.

THE LAUNDRY LISTS OF RSAF NEEDS

16. (C) Col Khalid Shablaan, RSAF Directorate of Operations and Plans, presented the RSAF's initial briefing, describing its history, and leading up to the present day need to for the KSA to build its own military industrial base in order to increase employment for young Saudi men. He added that the RSAF would also rely more greatly on local depot maintenance for the same reason. (NOTE: Maintenance and Logistics are not RSAF strong suits.)

17. (C) The Director of Operations and Plans, Maj Gen Al Garni, provided the following list of urgently needed weapons to which the U.S. had yet to respond:
JSOW (currently not released to KSA by OSD);
SLAM-ER (currently not released to KSA by OSD);
AGM-88E HARM/HDAM (currently under USG review for FMS, CTA for KSA has been approved);
JASSM (currently not released to KSA by OSD);
AIM-120D (not released for FMS by OSD, no Export version available);
Small Diameter Bomb (GBU-39) (currently not released to KSA by OSD);
NCTR (Non-Cooperative Target Recognition) (currently under USG review for FMS);
ECCE Pod integration with 274 mb/sec data transfer rate.
(Released to KSA but at a slower transfer rate of

approximately 137mbs)

The Ops Director asked for a more precise response to the RSAF's request to participate again in Green Flag and Blue Flag exercises, hopefully by 2012. (USMTM AFD advisors have been told the RSAF would not be invited to a GF unless they were a member of the coalition. The RSAF was briefed about GF while attending a RED FLAG exercise at Nellis. Currently there are no BF exercises scheduled due to continued &real world8 efforts by CAOC personnel, AFD advisors have worked with AFCENT to invite the RSAF when the next BF is scheduled.)

Maj Gen Al Garni highlighted a new request for intelligence sharing on COIN operations TTPs (tactics, techniques and procedures) for conducting asymmetric warfare, along with COIN lessons learned. Lt Gen Hostage offered to bring a team to discuss COIN operations.

18. (C) The Operations Director outlined the need for releasability of U.S. secure communications for air platforms from Britain and France: Typhoons, MRTT Airbus refuelers, Cougars and Tornados. He specifically noted that the Saudi Air Force was aware that the Australians had been approved for U.S. secure comms on their Airbuses, and the French had told them they would either have to delay delivery or &do something else.8

19. (C) Lt Gen Faisal said the problem with the Saturn Radios on the British Typhoons was that the U.S. Have Quick-II technology was embedded in them and the U.S. said its technology was not releasable. Did the U.S. have an alternative recommendation? He made a special plea for resolution of this issue. For the MRTT Airbus refuelers, Cougar helicopters and Tornado jets, the need was for expedited release of MIDS/SY-100/SAASM communications technology.

110. (C) The Director of Arms and Ammunition, Brig Gen Al Ghamdi, explained the RSAF's need for LANTIRN targeting pod

spare repair parts. (NOTE: The USAF has accelerated the shipment of the first 14 Sniper pods and a contract for an additional 21 is expected to be signed by April 2010.) Brig Gen Al Ghamdi stressed that the contract for the additional 21 should be accelerated. He also stressed the immediate need for GBU-10, -12, -24 and -31/38 (JDAMS) munitions. (Note: the GBU-10's are due in country in mid-January; the GBU-12's in March, the JDAMS in September 2010; but the RSAF wants them all as soon as possible.) The RSAF also did not want to wait two years for the GBU-24/WGU-43, but asked for immediate release and delivery of WGU-39's instead.

GBU-10 MK-84 FAILURE RATE AGAINST HOUTHI POSITIONS

111. (C) Lt Gen Faisal said he did not know the total number of GBU-10 laser guided bombs that have been dropped so far against Houthi targets on the Yemeni border, but there were 30) 40 that were duds. Citing aerial photos as evidence, Lt Gen Faisal stated the bombs had hit their targets but failed to explode. He thought the problem might be nose-well cracks with the Mk-84 (bomb body component of the GBU-10) that were produced by General Dynamics, but not those produced by Raytheon. He asked about the USAF failure rate in Afghanistan. Lt Gen Hostage explained that his failure rate was .01% per thousand bombs dropped. He described the USAF's &cradle to grave8 testing and maintenance on its bombs. He offered USMTM and other experts, help to investigate, which Lt Gen Faisal indicated he would accept.

FIVE CARS WITH ONLY EIGHT TIRES

112. (C) Summing up the delays and the lack of releasable systems, Lt Gen Faisal said the situation was like a car dealer who sold five cars, but with a total of only eight tires. Lt Gen Hostage said he would add his voice to those

of other military officers to see if there was any way to expedite specific urgent cases, but he outlined the arms export legalities that must be observed. Maj Gen Van Sickle assured Lt Gen Faisal that USMTM was tracking all of the weapons cases closely and moving each case forward as quickly as possible. Lt Gen Hostage invited Lt Gen Faisal to visit his Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) in Qatar to see for himself whether there would be cause to partner with the U.S. in Regional Integrated Air and Missile Defense. They hoped to see each other at the upcoming Bahrain Air Show. Lt Gen Faisal related that the RSAF was thinking seriously about buying two C-17 aircraft. Discussions were underway with USMTM and the manufacturer (Boeing). (NOTE: A capabilities briefing is scheduled in Kingdom later this month.)

COMMENT: MODA ISN'T HAPPY

113. (C) It was clear that Lt Gen Faisal was instructed to press Lt Gen Hostage on RSAF releasability problems. He raised the same issues in both the private office call and briefings. He made no mention of Saudi interest) or not) in purchasing the F-15 SA aircraft on offer, and he offered little chance to address other business.

SMITH